

Message Text

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FOLLOWING REPEAT MEXICO 237 ACTION SECSTATE INFO LIMA DEA HQS
JAN 9.

QUOTE: UNCLAS MEXICO 0237

LIMA FOR AMBASSADOR VANCE

S/NM FOR DUGSTAD; SER/INC WAMPLER; DEA FOR EOI CUSACK;

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SNAR MX

SUBJECT: PRESS CONFERENCE ON HERBICIDES

REF: A. ALBERTI/DUGSTAD TELCON JAN 8, 1976 B. 76 MEXICO 147
C. 76 MEXICO 65.

1. FOLLOWING IS INFORMAL TRANSLATION OF THE ACCOUNT
APPEARING IN JAN 8 EXCELSIOR OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE HELD
BY DR. ALEJANDRO GERTZ, THE OVERALL NARCOTICS CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR
FOR THE MEXICAN ATTORNEY GENERAL. AS DEPARTMENT AWARE, THIS
PRESS CONFERENCE WAS GIVEN IN RESPONSE TO THE ARTICLES RE-
PORTED IN REFS B&C, WHICH CONTAINED CRITICISM OF THE GOM'S
USE OF HERBICIDES AGAINST POPPY AND MARIJUANA FIELDS.

2. BEGIN TEXT: "YES, WE ARE USING HERBICIDES AND WE ARE
GOING TO END THE GROWING OF NARCOTICS".

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GRAMOXONE -IS INOFFENSIVE TO THE ECOLOGY",

"THIS IS NEITHER A MERE DECLARATION NOR A COMMITMENT WITH ANY COUNTRY"

"WHOEVER ARE OPPOSED TO THIS CAMPAIGN ARE NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS AND THEIR ACCOMPLICES"

BY ELIAS CHAVEZ, EXCELSIOR REPORTER.

MARIJUANA AND POPPY ARE GROWN OVER APPROXIMATELY SIX HUNDRED THOUSAND SQUARE KILOMETERS, MORE THAN ONE FOURTH OF THE NATIONAL TERRITORY, YESTERDAY ANNOUNCED THE OFFICIAL MAYOR OF THE PROCURADURIA GENERAL, ALEJANDRO GERTZ MANERO, WHO DECLARED: "YES...WE ARE USING HERBICIDES AND BEFORE THE MIDDLE OF THIS YEAR WE ARE GOING TO FINISH TOTALLY WITH THE CULTIVATION OF NARCOTICS IN THIS COUNTRY. THIS IS NOT SIMPLY A DECLARATION OR A COMMITMENT TO ANY COUNTRY; IT IS A FIRM COMMITMENT TO OURSELVES AND FOR THE DIGNITY OF MEXICO".

GERTZ MANERO ASSURED US THAT THE HERBICIDE USED--GRAMOXONE--"IS INOFFENSIVE TO THE ECOLOGY" AND IT IS COMPLETELY AUTHORIZED BY THE SANITARY CODE AND BY THE SECRETARIAT OF AGRICULTURE.

"WHOEVER ARE OPPOSED--HE SAID--"TO THIS BATTLE WHICH BEGAN THE TWENTIETH OF NOVEMBER, ARE THE NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS AND THEIR ACCOMPLICES, WHO HAVE UNLEASHED A CAMPAIGN TO SHOW US AS IRRESPONSIBLE, AS CRIMINALS WHO ARE CAUSING AN ECOLOGY PROBLEM.

"NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS AND THEIR ACCOMPLICES--HE ADDED--WANT TO STOP US IN OUR PLACE, BUT THIS TIME WE WILL DEFEAT THEM TOTALLY."

AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE EFFICIENCY RESULTING FROM THE USE OF HERBICIDES, HE INDICATED THAT IN THE PAST MONTH "WE DOUBLED THE (GREATEST) SUCCESSES WHICH HAD EVER BEEN REACHED IN THE HISTORY OF ANY CAMPAIGN AND THIS MONTH THE RESULTS WILL BE INCREDIBLE".

CONCRETELY, HE POINTED OUT THAT WHILE IN DECEMBER OF 1974 THERE WERE DESTROYED 206 FIELDS OF MARIJUANA AND POPPY, REPRESENTING A TOTAL OF 557,527 SQUARE METERS, DURING THE PAST MONTH THERE WERE DESTROYED--WITH THE USE OF HERBICIDES--694 FIELDS CONTAINING 2,551,139 SQUARE METERS.

THE SLIGHTLY MORE THAN SIX HUNDRED THOUSAND SQUARE KILOMETERS IN WHICH POPPY AND MARIJUANA ARE GROWN UNCLASSIFIED

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BELONG--PRINCIPALLY--TO THE STATES OF OAXACA, GUERRERO, COLIMA, JALISCO, MICHOACAN, SINALOA, DURANGO AND CHIHUAHUA.

THOSE ARE THE "CRITICAL STATES", SAID GERTZ MANERO, IN WHICH MAY BE ENCOUNTERED AS MANY AS TWENTY THOUSAND FIELDS OF MARIJUANA AND POPPY.

DURING THE PAST YEAR--HE SAID--THERE WERE DESTROYED MORE THAN EIGHTEEN THOUSAND FIELDS, BUT "EVEN THEN MUCH

MEXICAN NARCOTICS ENTERED THE CONSUMER MARKET."
HE EXPLAINED THAT THE PROBLEM IS COMPLICATED BECAUSE
ASIDE FROM THE GREAT LAND AREA USED FOR THE CULTIVATION
OF NARCOTICS, THE NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS PLANT DURING THE
ENTIRE YEAR"IN ORDER TO OBTAIN SEVERAL HARVESTS IN A
SHORT TIME. AND TO FINISH WITH ALL THOSE FIELDS,
THROUGH THOSE SYSTEMS WHICH WE HAD BEEN USING, IS
PRACTICALLY AN IMPOSSIBLE TASK. EVEN THOUGH WE MIGHT
HAVE A SQUAD OF SOLDIERS IN ORDER TO DESTROY EACH FIELD,
HOW ARE WE GOING TO TRANSPORT ALL THESE PEOPLE AND GIVE
THEM FOOD AND RETURN TO CARRY THEM OUT WHEN THE PLANTING
AREAS ARE HUNDREDS OF KILOMETERS FROM THE HIGHWAYS, IN
THE MOST INACCESSIBLE PLACES IN THE MOUNTAINS, AT ALTITUDES
BETWEEN FIVE AND SEVEN THOUSAND FEET?"
FURTHERMORE--HE SAID--"IT SERVES NOTHING TO DESTROY
SEVENTY PERCENT OF THE FIELDS IF THE WITH THE REMAINING
THIRTY PERCENT IT IS SUFFICIENT TO PRODUCE A QUANTITY
OF NARCOTICS WHICH IN ANY CASE REPRESENTS A SERIOUS
PROBLEM. WE MUST DESTROY ONE HUNDRED PERCENT OF THE
FIELDS."

BUT HE INDICATED THAT THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FIELDS
MUST ALSO BE CARRIED OUT "BEFORE THEY SCORE THE POPPIES
AND OBTAIN THE GUM. BECAUSE IT SERVES NO USE TO DESTROY
THEM WHEN THEY HAVE ALREADY BEEN SCORED AND WHEN THE GUM
HAS ALREADY BEEN OBTAINED. WE WOULD THEN ONLY BE
FOOLING OURSELVES". FACED WITH THIS PROBLEM THE OFFICE
OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL DECIDED TO SEEK AN INTELLIGENT
SOLUTION" IN ORDER TO DESTROY PLANTINGS BEFORE THE
NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS COULD EXPLOIT THEM".
THE LOGICAL SOLUTION WAS--HE SAID--THE USE OF
HERBICIDES"BUT HERBICIDES PERMITTED BY THE COMPETENT
AUTHORITIES."

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HE ASSURED US THAT THE HERBICIDE USED, GRAMOXONE,
HAS BEEN USED FOR "MANY YEARS" IN THE ENTIRE NATIONAL
TERRITORY WHEVERVER THERE IS ORGANIZED AGRICULTURE."
HE POINTED OUT THAT BEFORE DECIDING UPON THE USE OF
GRAMOXONE, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE CONSULTED THE
AGRICULTURAL AUTHORITIES AND THAT BASED ON THE SANITARY
CODE"THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE AUTHORIZED ITS USE
IN THE COMMUNICATION 230/74 OF THE NINTH OF JULY 1974."
"IF WE WOULD USE A NON-APPROVED HERBICIDE"--HE SAID--
"WE WOULD BE CRIMINALS. THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE
IS A RESPONSIBLE INSTITUTION AND WE COULD NOT COMBAT
ONE CRIME BY COMMITTING ANOTHER."
HE THEN SAID THAT IT WAS DECIDED TO USE HERBICIDES
"NOT BECAUSE OF FOREIGN PRESSURES, BUT BECAUSE
ONE HAS TO SEE THE MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM IN ORDER TO

FEEL HIMSELF COMMITTED TO RESOLVE IT."

GERTZ MANERO MENTIONED THAT THROUGH THE USE OF HERBICIDES

"WITH A SINGLE HELICOPTER WE CAN DESTROY MORE THAN

FIFTY FIELDS DAILY."

AND CONCERNING HIS ASSURANCE THAT GRAMOXONE DOES NOT

CAUSE DAMAGE TO THE ECOLOGY, HE POINTED OUT THAT

THIS SAME HERBICIDE WAS USED BY THE FARMERS IN ORDER TO

CLEAR FIELDS OF POTATOES, SUGAR CANE AND COTTON.

3. EMBASSY WILL REPORT EDITORIAL COMMENT IF AND WHEN
IT OCCURS.

JOVA UNQUOTE KISSINGER

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